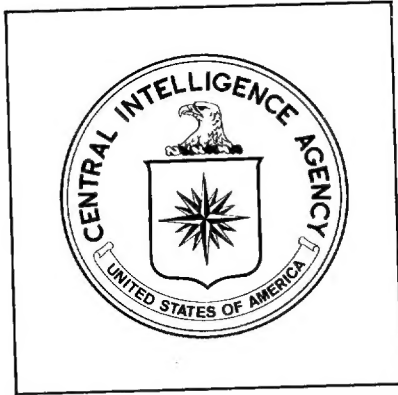


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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

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Dahomey

People's Republic of Benin Proclaimed

President Kerekou's three year old leftist military regime has renamed Dahomey the "People's Republic of Benin". A single "Marxist-Leninist" political party has also been established and the party's central committee has been charged with directing the government and the "revolution". The changes were announced last Sunday by President Kerekou on the first anniversary of his proclamation that the country would henceforth pursue a path of "scientific socialism" based on Marxist-Leninist principles.

The change of name represents yet another effort by Kerekou and his radical cohorts to break with the legacy left by the French, who gave the country the name of Dahomey. Benin was the name of an ancient African kingdom that stretched along the Gulf of Guinea whose capital was located in present day Nigeria. Popularizing the country's new name could be difficult because most citizens probably have little knowledge of the origins of the term or emotional feeling for that name.

Developments in Benin's "revolution" during the past few months suggest that the government's radical leadership has significantly increased its control over the country. Early this year, the regime narrowly fended off an attempted takeover by a moderate cabinet minister and last June the government forcibly suppressed a spontaneous popular insurrection in Cotonou that followed the murder of one of President Kerekou's political rivals which Kerekou himself ordered. The government has since organized a new system of public control through the establishment of political and paramilitary organizations throughout the country parallel to the traditional administrative machinery of the state.

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An anti-Kerekou exile group called the Front for the Liberation and Rehabilitation of Dahomey, which surfaced in Brussels this fall, apparently continues to plot ineffectually. The Front's leaders and membership are largely unknown and it is doubtful that the group has much support within the Dahomean armed forces. The Kerekou regime believes that the Front is composed largely of supporters of former President Zinsou, who has lived in Paris since his ouster in a military coup in 1969, and is keeping suspected Zinsou sympathizers in Benin under close watch. (CONFIDENTIAL)



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